

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 347

INFO USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8788

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, KS

SUBJECT: PRESS INTEREST IN JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION
OF ROKG

1. SINCE STORIES ON JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATIONS BEGAN LAST WEEK, U.S. JOURNALISTS IN SEOUL HAVE BEEN QUERYING EMBASSY ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF CASE. WASHINGTON POST, NEW YORK TIMES, NBC TV, UPI, NEWSWEEK ALL HAVE SENT AMERICAN REPORTERS TO SUPPLEMENT REGULAR STRINGER COVERAGE AND WE EXPECT OTHER MEDIA VISITORS. TO DATE ALL ELEMENTS OF EMBASSY HAVE MAINTAINED STRICT NO COMMENT STANCE ON ALL ASPECTS TOUCHING ON INVESTIGATION AND ISSUE OF INTELLIGENCE GATHERING. WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO BE FORTHCOMING ON PROVIDING FACTS ON HOW EMBASSIES HANDLE SCHEDULING AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OF CODELS, HOW GLOBAL PL-480 TRANSACTIONS ARE ADMINISTERED UNDER THE LAW, AND ON OTHER MATTERS CLEARLY IN PUBLIC DOMAIN.

2. HOWEVER AS JOURNALISTS BEGIN TO NARROW SCOPE OF THEIR QUERIES WE ANTICIPATE GROWING PRESSURE HERE TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE INVOCATION FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT. SOME REPORTERS HAVE HINTED AT POSSIBLE RELEVANCE OF FOIA IN THIS SITUATION.

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3. TODAY NYT JOURNALIST JAMES STERBA MADE FOLLOWING

SPECIFIC REQUESTS: A. ACCESS TO THE EMBASSY'S FILE OF VISITORS LISTS COVERING THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS TO COMPILE A LIST OF CODELS AND OTHER VISITS OF INTEREST TO HIM;
B. ACCESS TO THE UNCLASSIFIED FILES OF CODEL ITINERARIES AND SCHEDULES FOR RECENT YEARS.

4. AFTER CONSIDERATION, EMBASSY BELIEVES VISITOR LISTS AND UNCLASSIFIED CODEL SCHEDULES THAT WERE REPRODUCED FOR USE BY VARIOUS EMBASSY OFFICES AND SIMILAR RECORDS ARE IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. EMBASSY INTENDS TO MAKE THESE FILES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST, UNLESS ADVISED OTHERWISE BY THE DEPARTMENT.

5. CODEL SCHEDULES AND OTHER MATERIAL PREPARED IN MESSAGE FORM AND SENT TO WASHINGTON, WHETHER CLASSIFIED OR NOT, WE BELIEVE DO NOT FALL INTO THE SAME CATEGORY. THE EMBASSY ASSUMES THAT THESE MATERIALS MAY NOW BE CONNECTED WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION, AND THAT THEREFORE THEY SHOULD NOT BE RELEASED INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. THE EMBASSY DOES NOT PLAN TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO SUCH DOCUMENTS UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.

6. WE WILL CONTINUE TO FORWARD TO WASHINGTON QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION WHICH ARE NOT COVERED BY OUR PRESENT GUIDANCE.
SNEIDER

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